



Mission statement and strategic objectives

MISSION STATEMENT AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

About EADTU

The European Association of Distance Teaching Universities - EADTU - is the representative organisation of both the European open and distance learning universities and of the organisations including consortia of higher education institutions active in the field of distance education and e-learning. By this, EADTU is the main voice of the community for open and distance higher education and e-learning in Europe.

Members of EADTU are *universities that are dedicated to off-campus target groups* using distance teaching methods and systemic study guidance, mostly in regional study centres as well as *organisations including consortia* consisting of universities with mainly mainstream on-campus students but also give priority to offering education for off-campus students.

EADTU supports the European development of its members and their members on the inner-consortia level and is committed to strengthening its members, both individually and collectively, through stimulation of cooperation and expression of views on the national and international level. Because of its strong identity and branding EADTU has become the spokesperson in EU consultation meetings. EADTU strengthens its ties with strategic partners via Memoranda of Understanding (MoU); for example with e-learning industry.

Students are main stakeholders of EADTU members. The natural learning environment of students is becoming more integrated with Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Students' perspectives and expectations align accordingly. Contemporary students now embrace high content flexibility and educational methods which can be individualised to serve specific needs, technologies and platforms. They experience lifelong learning by an increasing number of technological possibilities. EADTU cooperates with different European educational stakeholders to formulate policy for the development and delivery of flexible content, so as to facilitate the satisfaction of the individualised needs of students.

Founded in 1987, EADTU now embraces a total of 22 members in 19 European countries. The current member configuration spans over 2,000,000 students and over 200 conventional universities as part of our organisations including consortia. Over the past years EADTU has taken the role of knowledge disseminator in different European projects. The EADTU network is excellent for dissemination and covers the European Union and most of the Central Eastern European Countries (CEEC) on Higher Education, including many areas of scientific research.

Contextual changes

Societal, demographic, and business changes stimulated a reconsideration of the future of EADTU: its mission, strategic objectives, action lines, and organisational chart. The Heerlen Message of the EADTU Open Conference of 2004 was an important point of reference for this review. Following the Heerlen Message, the Mission Statement of EADTU now refers to *Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning* in distance HE.

The model of LOF learning embraces the characteristics of: open learning, distance learning, e-learning, online learning, open accessibility, multimedia support, virtual mobility, learning communities, dual mode (earn & learn) approaches, and the like. The EADTU members should seek effectiveness and efficiency by joining forces over their areas of operation and by stimulating and co-founding new LOF learning initiatives in distance HE among the EU member states, especially in the new EU countries.

The review process embraces the Bologna Declaration (BA/MA structure), the Lisbon strategy (European competitiveness through lifelong learning), the mainstreaming of e-learning, the proliferation of LOF learning throughout distance HE, and the perception of changing European student patterns and needs. The EADTU organisation must have the appropriate resources to allow efficient and effective future operations. Important points of attention are the branding and the identity of EADTU, the consolidation of the national members (universities and organisations including consortia), and the structural expansion of memberships throughout CEE Countries and the Mediterranean.

Mission statement

EADTU is Europe's leading representative association for LOF learning in distance HE. It is committed to a path towards a true European Learning Space (ELS) in accordance with the Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Strategy, through bilateral and multilateral cooperation between LOF learning universities in distance HE and organisations including consortia for LOF learning, whilst respecting each other's autonomy and diversity. EADTU engages in interaction with representative European student member bodies and/or platforms whenever possible, so as to incorporate students' interests at best. EADTU will contribute to the development of the ELS by supporting and promoting state-of-the-art educational networks in the field of lifelong and flexible learning, virtual mobility, and quality assurance and accreditation. Developing and sustaining highly esteemed educational networks requires members to deliver a top performance in research and development. EADTU functions both as a portal and a platform for these activities.

Strategic objectives

EADTU has formulated six strategic objectives:

- I. Further promote LOF learning within the European Learning Space for distance HE by means of innovation, R&D, large-scale implementation projects and developing a framework of quality assurance and accreditation;
- II. Communicate on benefits and impact of LOF learning in distance HE within Europe as well as worldwide. This can be achieved by organising an annual conference; participate in relevant conferences and collaboration with other conference organisers; attend and organise consultation meetings;
- III. Expand the use of LOF learning in distance HE in order to achieve a mainstream position and full coverage for the EU countries as well as substantial coverage for the EU neighbouring or partnering countries. This can be achieved by strengthening the position of EADTU in the EU; expand the membership covering new EU member states and introduce the membership to LOF learning principles by involving the partnership in projects and dissemination of project results;
- IV. Contribute to European policy for LOF learning by being the representative spokesperson engaged in EU programme consultations and policy-making.
- V. Strengthen the profile and position of EADTU and its members by building alliances and strategic partnerships with other relevant international organisations (e.g. eLIG, ICDE), and by joining forces with national and international stakeholders where appropriate.
- VI. Provide support and assistance to members by offering information and providing a platform for the knowledge exchange between them.

Elaboration of strategic objectives

I. Further develop and implement the concept of *Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning within the European Learning Space for distance Higher Education*

EADTU develops European policy for its members in key areas:

- LOF learning prescribes the ELS along the time dimension. Lifelong learning is the persons engagement in learning throughout their lives and includes formal school, educational and employee programs and also non-formal and informal learning, utilising various modes such as distance, conventional and technology-enhanced learning.
- Virtual mobility prescribes the ELS along the spatial dimension. Virtual mobility is a means of entering into formal learning programmes and also non-formal and informal learning processes which traditionally require physical mobility but which can now be undertaken without recourse to physical travel. Virtual mobility may overcome the disabilities and financial burdens that persons may have with physical mobility.
- Preconditions for ELS are prescribed by inter-institutional cooperation and a proper inter-institutional technical infrastructure with generic applications. The inter-institutional cooperation is required for the languages of courses, ECTS transfers, joint degrees, mutual research and development, curriculum development, and shared teaching pools.

The inter-institutional technical infrastructure with generic applications is required for creating compatibility of platforms and courseware products from industry vendors, educational institutions, publishers, government agencies, systems integrators, content providers, and other institutions. Preconditions should be well aligned with reflected students' needs, considering their changing technological and pedagogical needs in an evolving European lifelong learning context.

- Frameworks for quality assurance and accreditation prescribe the ELS along the dimension of quality. Quality criteria are formulated to optimise (in time and [virtual] space) the learning outcomes at the institutional, programme and course level offered by the LOF learning universities and organisations including consortia for LOF learning. This offers assurance to all stakeholders and society in general that the learning provisions are of assessed quality and certified accordingly. Improving the quality of e-learning ultimately supports the Bologna objectives ('e-Bologna'). EADTU will develop a framework for quality assurance and accreditation. It will have a specific scope, next to content within the overall assessment process. EADTU will bring together expertise on a European-wide scale with involvement of expert institutions of the distance teaching universities, research and development institutes and other organisations in the field of quality assurance and accreditation.

II. Communicate on benefits and impact of LOF learning in distance HE within Europe as well as worldwide

Promoting LOF learning in distance HE within and beyond Europe will stimulate the European Learning Space and make apparent the associated advantages of virtual (student) mobility and the mutual benefits of educational innovation, and R&D. In this, feedback from the student population is highly welcome. It is seen as an important way by which to measure the rate of success. It is expected that through the accession of new members the participation in European programmes and projects will increase. Completed projects and the sharing of knowledge will improve the limited organisational and technological resources within these countries. It will improve the quality of education and offer more economic prosperity.

III. Expand the use of LOF learning in distance HE in order to achieve a mainstream position and full coverage for the EU countries as well as substantial coverage for the EU neighbouring or partnering countries

EADTU is committed to the expansion of ELS in collaboration with institutions from accession and neighbouring countries along with representative European student organisations, so as to stimulate the use of ICT in education, the greater mobility of teachers and students and academic cooperation (course and curriculum development), the motivation to learn foreign languages (i.e., removing foreign language barriers), the increase of the interoperability between European and neighbouring educational systems within a framework of quality assurance, the expansion of the availability and exchange of e-content.

IV. Contribute to European policy for Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning

EADTU represents and is regarded by the European Commission as a main spokesperson for the whole of Europe in LOF learning in distance HE. EADTU engages in EU Programme Consultations and EU-policy making with the objective of strengthening the political lead of EADTU in LOF learning within Europe. Consultation meetings with the European Commission are organised on the strategic and expert level with participation of EADTU members. EADTU formulates position papers or statements in areas such as building a mature knowledge-based society, widening participation in HE, further flexibilisation of the Bologna BA/MA structure, quality assurance and accreditation, e-learning and virtual mobility and lifelong learning. Student bodies and/or student unions, having policy on the Bologna and Lisbon process, are regarded by EADTU as important policy partners representing the student perspective for European nations.

V. Strengthen the profile and position of EADTU and its members

EADTU facilitates and supports the liaison of its members and their members (including possible student representation) with stakeholders at the regional, national and international level, i.e., with regional public and private institutions, national governments, European Commission, higher professional education, (virtual) universities, consortia, associations, study centres, expertise centres, top technological institutes, content providers, publishers, system integrators, and industry in general. EADTU informs its members of developments and new constellations of actors in the field of LOF learning. It initiates and participates in processes which may have an impact on the future of its members such as developing a framework of quality assurance and accreditation. EADTU is dedicated to safeguarding the interests of its members and their student population by sharing vital knowledge and expertise throughout its extensive relational network, both formally and informally. EADTU aims to provide advice to and liaise with stakeholders in as far as it is in the interest of its members.

EADTU operates on sustainable development of its members; picking up on promising initiatives; instead of looking at “frozen moments”. EADTU is a learning organisation.

VI. Provide support and assistance according to the needs of the members

EADTU offers direct support to the members in accordance to their needs for information, cooperation and European profiling. The needs are determined in meetings on the strategic, faculty and research level.

Information support is provided based on:

- Permanent updating of latest news related to LOF learning.
- Analysis and discussion of specific topics regarding LOF learning.
- Dissemination, combining several dissemination activities of different projects within EADTU and benefiting from concentration and specialisation.

Cooperation:

- Supporting, developing and implementing multilateral and bilateral collaborative actions in the framework of the programmes of the European Commission.
- Facilitating platforms of experts; cooperation in discipline based EADTU Academic Networks.
- Creating Task Forces with the objective to explore priority issues in cooperation.

European profiling:

- The annual EADTU Conference serves the objective of promoting the community of LOF learning in the broadest possible way and provides a dissemination platform for EADTU members as well as non-EADTU members to exchange knowledge on programmes, projects, organisations, R&D, products and services.

Action lines

For achieving the strategic objectives a number of action lines have been identified and categorized under “returning” and “dedicated” actions. The annual activity plan contains the specification of appropriate action lines.

Returning actions

A. Branding and identity

Positioning EADTU as the network of excellence for *Lifelong Open and Flexible* (LOF) learning in distance HE.

B. Information and dissemination

Widespread communication by means of conferences, seminars, publications, printing, academic meetings etc. EADTU uses a database for identifying key departments, research, and service centres in universities and educational institutions from all European countries.

C. Conceptualisation of LOF learning in distance HE

The further development of the model of Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning (open learning, distance learning, e-learning, online learning, open accessibility, multimedia support, virtual mobility, learning communities, dual mode (earn & learn) approaches, and the like) and the European Learning Space (ELS).

D. Academic networks

Full-members are invited to take part in the Academic Networks of EADTU. The Academic Networks are meeting two times a year, once in conjunction with the annual EADTU conference and one other time in relation to a study visit to a centre of excellence. The Chair is (re)elected by the members of the Network. The chair of the Academic Network has to report to the board yearly.

E. Annual conference

The annual EADTU Conference is hosted by one of the members and positions a conference theme that is of direct interest to all of its members. The conference is a joint collaboration between EADTU and the input of its members. The conference is organised by the EADTU

secretariat in close cooperation with the hosting organisation. Every year a Programme Committee is installed to guarantee a high quality conference.

F. Acquisition of new members

EADTU aims to work together with the growing number of countries that are willing to adopt the LOF learning concept. In close consultation with EADTU members potential new partners will be selected and approached for membership.

G. Development of partnerships

Stimulate cooperation between EADTU members and other organisations by offering platforms of mutual interest and initiating collaborative projects in joint degree programmes and/or research. Develop and maintain at EADTU organisation level alliances and strategic partnerships with other relevant international organisations (such as eLIG, ICDE).

H. EU related positioning and cooperation

Contribute to European policy for LOF learning by being the representative spokesperson engaged in EU programme consultations and policy-making EU related positioning and cooperation

Dedicated actions

I. Thematic seminars

To address institutional issues of mutual interest EADTU organises special seminars on dedicated subjects. The themes for these seminars vary from education, research to policy making issues. EADTU organises thematic seminars in combination with the Rectors' and Associations Conferences or on direct demand.

J. Task forces

Task Forces are teams of experts working on a direct assignment from the Rectors or Associations Conference. They have an evaluation and analysing task, leading to a position paper on recommendations on further actions. The assignment is restricted in time. A report has to be submitted to the board for decision on follow up. (Identified topics are quality assurance and accreditation, virtual mobility, flash courses, funding, copyright issues, international legislation, intellectual property)

K. Cooperation with industry

Interaction with the business community is seen by EADTU as an important contributing factor to the development, progress and promotion of LOF learning. By combining the academic and commercial knowledge and experience of cooperating parties on LOF learning, different gains can be expected.

L. Cooperation with employers

Involvement of employers in the educational system on content and skills so as to improve the qualifications of the student in line with the market demand (employability). Provide platforms and business models for connecting industry and education.

M. Development and implementation of projects

EADTU initiates projects to create collaborative actions on innovative issues, with an emphasis on exchange of experience, expertise and research.

N. Mobilisation of the research community

Researchers of our member institutions are encouraged to collaborate on common interests. These interests are identified in our Academic Network meetings and consultation meetings with the Commission.

Strategic objectives	Action lines
<p>I. Further develop and implement the concept of <i>Lifelong Open and Flexible</i> (LOF) learning within the European Learning Space for distance Higher Education.</p> <p>II. Communicate on benefits and impact of LOF learning in distance HE within Europe as well as worldwide.</p> <p>III. Expand the use of LOF learning in distance HE in order to achieve a mainstream position and full coverage for the EU countries as well as substantial coverage for the EU neighbouring or partnering countries.</p> <p>IV. Contribute to European policy for Lifelong Open and Flexible (LOF) learning in distance HE.</p> <p>V. Strengthen the profile and position of EADTU and its members.</p> <p>VI. Provide support and assistance according to the needs of the members.</p>	<p>Returning actions:</p> <p>A. Branding and identity</p> <p>B. Information and dissemination</p> <p>C. Conceptualisation of LOF learning in distance HE</p> <p>D. Academic networks</p> <p>E. Annual conference</p> <p>F. Acquisition of new members</p> <p>G. Development of partnerships</p> <p>H. EU related positioning and cooperation</p> <p>Dedicated actions:</p> <p>I. Thematic seminars</p> <p>J. Task forces</p> <p>K. Cooperation with industry</p> <p>L. Cooperation with employers</p> <p>M. Development and implementation of projects</p> <p>N. Mobilisation of the research community</p>



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